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**SERMON,**

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

**VERMONT**

**COLONIZATION SOCIETY,**

AT

**Montpelier, October 17, 1827.**

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BY CALVIN YALE,  
PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN CHARLOTTE.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE SOCIETY.

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**MONTPELIER.**

PRINTED BY E. P. WALTON—WATCHMAN OFFICE.

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## SERMON.

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PROVERBS, xvi. 9.

“BETTER IS A LITTLE, WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS, THAN GREAT REVENUES WITHOUT RIGHT.”

THE purposes for which we are assembled, are indeed of no ordinary magnitude. We are assembled for the promotion of truth, justice, humanity, the universal freedom of man, the cause of morality and religion, the cause of our country, and of the civilized world; nay, the common cause of every intelligent being upon this habitable globe. We are assembled to investigate the principles of right, in the intercourse of man with his fellow, and to cast in our contribution to alleviate the wretchedness of those who have been grievously wronged. What place more suitable to discuss these subjects, than that in which the Legislature of a state is in session, and what time more suitable for contributing, than that, when our storehouses are filled with plenty, and our hearts with gladness.

Come we then to the topics before us with ardent minds, and honest intentions.

The immediate object of the Colonization Society is, to relieve our nation from an onerous burden, the free coloured population, to redeem the same from degradation and crime, to place them on the shores of their mother country, in such circumstances, as favor their own improvement, and that of their kindred. And it cannot be de-



nied, that the successful prosecution of this object, may ultimately lead to the extinction of slavery in the United States; and in conjunction with the efforts of others, the extinction of it in the West Indies, and to the civilization of the whole African race.

O, that was a most triumphant subject of political glorying, that whatever human being "sets foot upon the soil of Britain, that moment he is free." And that was a most righteous decision of the English bench, that a footing upon the bottom of a British vessel, in whatever sea, gives the same rights, as a footing upon British soil.\* Why should not this be said of America, since she was the first to declare in the face of the world, that "all men are created free and equal, and have an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Alas! the evil which we are now seeking to eradicate was entailed upon us before we had a national existence. That we may not entail it upon the latest posterity, every American citizen is bound to do the utmost in his power.

It is a great, though gradual change of our relations to the people of colour, that the Colonization Society is seeking to compass. We would, that every white man should treat the man of colour as he would wish himself to be treated, on the supposition of a change in places. We would put our soul in their souls stead, and obey the golden rule. We would that they all were in their own land in the full enjoyment of civil and religious freedom. In order to be excited to assist in accomplishing this, sufficient motives must be placed before us, and we may consider them on the present occasion as ranged under the arguments, from PROFIT, POLICY and RIGHTEOUSNESS.

*The existing relations, between the white and coloured population of the United States are unprofitable.* This is true, both with respect to the free people of colour, and the slaves. Besides the general principle, that the man who is ignorant, brow beaten and oppressed, is an unprofitable servant, because he goes forth unwillingly and heart broken to his toil, we have statistical facts to show, that a vastly greater proportion of the crimes committed, and the consequent expenses to the public, for apprehension and punishment, are from the coloured population, than from the white.† And the reason of this is obvious: It is their moral debasement.

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\*Christian Observer, App. 1825, page 319.

† In Vermont the whole coloured population is only 918 souls, from



If the inquiry were made also respecting the public expenses of pauperism, similar results might be expected.

And every body knows, that very few of the race in this part of the world possess taxable property, so as to sustain any tolerable proportion of the public burdens. It follows therefore that in a pecuniary point of light, they are a dead weight upon the country. Taken together, they do not support themselves. What they are in respect to morals, the facts recorded in our courts of justice, will sufficiently show.

It is not my intention by these references to excite any odium against this unfortunate class of men, but the very truth when brought distinctly before the mind will afford the strongest motives to that particular exertion in their favor, which it is the object of this meeting to call forth. Besides, it is the argument of interest that I am now urging. And here I might make one appeal to the wisdom of our legislative counsels, and inquire, whether it might not be proper, by prospective enactments to forestal, and prevent the expenses of prison discipline, and the nameless and numberless expenses for the apprehension, subsistence and trial of felons, by provisions for raising the character of that population among which the greatest number of them is found? And the same inquiry may be made in reference to forestalling, and cutting off at length the expenses of pauperism? For the example of older states, and of Great Britain, amply shows, that the demands from this source can never be met by the richest provisions of legal charity.

If, as I have shown from facts, the free population of the coloured race is a pecuniary burden, and an immeasurable nuisance to morality, in the northern states, to say nothing of the danger impending

whom 24 have been furnished for the Penitentiary. About *one in every forty*.

In Mass. coloured pop. less than	7,000--	Coloured convicts,	50
Conn. " "	3,000	" "	39
N. York, " "	39,000	" "	154
	<hr/>		
	54,000		243

Massachusetts expended in supporting black convicts in states prison.	
	in 10 years,
	\$17,734
Conn. " "	in 15 years,
	37,166
N. York, " "	in 27 years,
	109,166
	<hr/>
	\$164,066

*First Rep. Pris. Dis. Soc. 1826, pages 36--37.*

from the possible combination of their physical strength at the south ; it will be no difficult task to show all this respecting slaves, and that they also are absolutely without profit to their owners, and to the community, both in a pecuniary and moral point of view.

To prove this, it were sufficient to survey the once fruitful, but now exhausted lands of lower Virginia and the Carolinas, and inquire why so great anxiety should be manifested by the slave holding states, that the acknowledged curse of our country should be extended to the newly organized states and territories west of the Mississippi, and even if possible north of the Ohio river, were it not to furnish a market for the produce of their stock of slaves, to the cultivation of which, for sale, they have turned their attention since a bad husbandry has worn out their soil ; or, perhaps to supply them places where they may emigrate with their slaves, as the last refuge from the bankruptcy induced by this improvident system.

Every observing man knows, it is cheaper to pay a labourer common wages, and let him take care of himself, than to engage to feed and clothe him comfortably, for all the work, that in such circumstances there is probability of his doing the year round. And every one knows, that few in the whole population are really effective men, or women, that do actually labour to any profit besides subsisting themselves. When from the products of these, is to be deducted the support of the aged, the sick, and the unproductive children on a plantation, what I pray you can remain for a luxurious master, and his extravagant household ? It must require good economy, on the best of land under such circumstances, to bring the year about, and not draw upon the future for present expenses. But when we consider the indolence and wastefulness of dependants, who are sure of support, and add to this the ignorance and recklessness of those who have no interest but that of a slave, embarrassment in property becomes almost certain, and a matter of course to the master. This reasoning is fully substantiated by well known facts in the British West Indies. After all the overworking, exacted by the lash of the *cart-whip* and to such extent, as to waste away the population, instead of permitting it to increase, the planters have been scarcely able to keep themselves from ruin even with a protecting duty, which goes to secure the sale of their sugars in Great Britain in preference to others. Strange to tell, in a climate, which requires but little, and where the masters furnish almost no clothing, and where incessant

toil is exacted, with the exception of one hour and an half, from sunrise till sunset, amounting to no less than ten hours, and sometimes to twelve and fourteen, during six days in the week, the year round, yet the planters cannot live, as they are in the habit of living, without the bounty of government, to the amount of one million two hundred thousand pounds annually, on sugar alone, and on collee, twenty-eight shillings per hundred weight. (*See Ch. Obs. passim. art. Neg. S. app. 1825, p. 326.*)

They cannot bring their articles into market in competition with the rest of the world, but after shortening the days of their field negroes by excessive overworking which wear them out quickly, they think it a great hardship that the way is not open for them, to get new recruits from Africa to supply the waste of death. If these facts, which are stated on the authority of parliamentary investigation, are not sufficient to prove the unprofitableness of the slave system, as it actually exists, nothing can prove it. And in the United States nothing but the continual opening of new fields for the employment of the surplus population of this class which our local situation is adapted to produce in the rich bottom lands of the southwest, has hitherto prevented the cry of bankruptcy from reaching to the ultimate regions of the north, in so loud and terrific a note, as nothing but the alarm of insurrection, and general massacre could exceed.

If it be objected to this statement that there is a willingness to retain the slave system, unprofitable and ruinous as it is, at the south, and great excitement is produced by every attempt to investigate the subject, I answer, that people in embarrassed circumstances, and not knowing the true cause are easily excited, while, as yet they are unwilling to abandon the course of long established business. Nor can they at once. But there are some who do see the evils, and the disprofit of this system. The discussions of the subject in the public prints in the year 1825, in which several writers in the slave-holding states took an active part, manifestly show that thinking men both at the north and south have but one opinion. The greatest light however comes to us through the medium of the English press, in their free discussions of their own systems of colonial slavery, and the remarks of travellers that visit the United States. It is from this source that many disclosures appear, which it would be hardly prudent for a northern man to make and which a southern man would

not make.\* Perhaps the time is gone by, in which it was necessary that the enormities of the slave system, should be brought to the light of day : and even allusions to them except for the support of argument we trust may shortly cease, by the common consent of all people ; when not only individuals, but state legislatures, and the national government shall make adequate appropriations to remove from us the burden under which our common country groans. Maryland set a noble example last March, when her legislature authorized the American Colonization Society to draw one thousand dollars a year from her treasury to transport free persons of colour within that state to Liberia.

I shall now proceed to the *second* argument, and show, *that sound policy requires the coloured population to be removed from this country.*

It was the same year that our fathers landed at Plymouth, 1620, when for the first time, slaves to the number of about forty, were brought to the ancient colony at Jamestown, in Virginia. It was a mistaken policy to admit them, and to think of cultivating the virgin soil of America, with any but the hands of freemen. It is not surprising however, that they who were brought up in delicate habits, and had witnessed no examples of a hardy yeomanry subsisting by personal labour, and enjoying at the same time the independence arising from competency, and sufficient mental cultivation, should at first revolt from the fatigues of felling the primitive forests, and suffering the rigors of heat and cold, in a climate to which they were strangers.

The feudal system too, of Lords and vassals, under the monarchies of Europe, and the Roman system of master and slave in that ancient republic were adapted to attract their notice, and the progress of religious freedom, had not yet led men to the adoption of those principles of conduct with respect to all men, required in the Scriptures.

We can conceive, that even good people, might have been mistaken in their views of this subject, so as, to congratulate themselves on the event, and to thank God for that, which proves to be the deepest curse ever inflicted upon North-America. Why should we be astonished at this, when almost two centuries had rolled away, and a mighty revolution had taken place in our own political state, before even the enlightened and benevolent, could be waked up to see the

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\*See Christian Observer, May, 1825, p. 269, app. 1825, p. 818.

unprofitableness, and impolicy, to say nothing of the injustice and inhumanity of holding their fellow men in unwilling bondage. We may indeed, account it a discovery of modern date, that it is not a hard lot for a freeman to labour and apply himself steadily to business, though it be in the open field, and in different states of the atmosphere.

Now the argument which bears upon the point in hand, is this,— So long as we have a class of people among us, who can never be raised to an equality, and feel themselves to be men with men, the effect is to foster a spirit of domination on the one hand and servility on the other, a spirit utterly incompatible with the freedom of our institutions and the genius of our government. Hence the danger of subversion. Therefore it is sound policy to have that people removed. But according to our own principles, we cannot do it, if they are unwilling. We have brought them here, and we cannot lawfully compel them to depart. But it is sound policy, to provide such a place for them, and set such motives before them, and afford them such facilities and assistance, as will lead them to a voluntary emigration to the place where the God of nature himself has fixed their appropriate home.

These are the very things, the Colonization Society proposes to accomplish. The enterprize is indeed one of great magnitude, but the necessity of it is imperious, and the dangers of neglecting to engage in it are immense. We do not expect that it will be achieved by individual exertion, or by private charity alone; but it is consistent with the genius of our institutions, that men should associate together to investigate subjects of common political concernment, and having come to an acquaintance with them, to diffuse the light throughout the community, and thus at length operate upon our legislative assemblies, confidently expecting that our political fathers, will be among the first to adopt those measures which the welfare of the body politic imperiously demands.

Although an unoffending individual of any complexion arrived to manhood, has a perfect natural right to liberty, and no man has a natural right to retain such an one a moment in bondage, yet it would be neither justice nor policy for our government at once to declare every man free. Better for us to take such a course as, to use the language of Mr. Buxton, will let the “nuisance die away and burn down to the socket.” This might have been speedily, as we have



seen, by its unprofitableness, if we could have kept it hemmed in, and restricted to the old states. To have done this would not have infringed their conventional rights.

Another course also I will venture to suggest might be pursued consistently with justice and sound policy; and that would be for the United States to buy of the slave holders the whole amount of this alleged property, which by the original confederation of the states, and the constitution of the government, was admitted to be such, and which in that "day which tried men's souls" could not safely have been denied, or refused. But now, since the government is firmly established and the principles of right acknowledged with respect to the man of colour as well as the white, that may be redeemed with money, which was then conceded for the sake of political safety; and the whole republic, like one great brotherhood on whom the smiles of prosperity rest, may deal righteously with that unfortunate race, as they have at length sought to redress, though at a late period, the wrongs of the surviving revolutionary soldiers. It is a national concern. And may I not be permitted to suggest, that it would be sound policy for the legislature of every state, immediately to make provision for the removal of every coloured person within its limits, who is willing to go to Africa, and to declare as did the state of New-York, that all of them born after a certain period shall be free; and finally that the United States in a short series of years, should purchase and remove, at the national charge, the whole of those whom it once consented to have kept in bondage? Does not national justice, national consistency and national safety require it? The interest of individuals too, who hold slaves, will shortly require it according to the preceding statements, unless like the British government, with respect to the West Indies, we consent in one form or another to pay a bounty for slave grown produce. The argument from policy will receive additional strength, while we consider as proposed—*Thirdly—The argument from righteousness.*

Here, it will be taken for granted that any thing which is morally wrong cannot be politically right. We know, we feel that there is ONE who "rules among the inhabitants of the earth, as well as in the armies of heaven," that hears the sighs of the captive, and sees the tears and stripes of the oppressed.

If it were satisfactorily proved, that the master has an equal right to the services of the man of colour bought with his money, or raised

upon his estate, as he has to the services of a horse or an ox acquired in like manner, yet were it incumbent on him in each case to show an equivalent rendered for such service, and the authority by which he claims it.

In the case of the brute the full equivalent, where no abuse is inflicted, is the care and protection and sensitive comfort, furnished to the animal, and the authority is the special grant of the supreme ruler. Where every thing is as it should be, it proves a matter of mutual accommodation, and it can be hardly determined, especially in these northern climates, which is most the servant, the man, or the domestic animal which he feeds and shelters, and provides for in the depths of winter, when if left to itself it would inevitably perish.

But the case is different with the man who is a slave, though of the lowest grade of common intellect.

He is possessed of a nature competent to provide for itself; and if there may be many cases in which slaves are not competent to provide for themselves, though of adult age, these cases are wholly adventitious, and would cease to exist, in the climate, to which they were originally adapted if not where they now are. The equivalent for service therefore is not the protection and subsistence afforded. Besides, the fact in many cases is, that no protection, and no subsistence is afforded, except that which the wretched man furnishes himself, by spending one day in seven, and that too, the proper time of holy rest, in laboring on his provision grounds or attending the market. Because the six days toil every week, under the lash of the driver or other stimulant equally cruel must needs be exacted, for which he receives absolutely no compensation. Tell me not, that while in the vigor of life, he is paying the expenses of his childhood, and laying up support for old age. Tell me not, that this is as much as many freemen do, who have no patrimonial estate. Be it so. Yet the free man all along has the enjoyment of the sweet charities of life; and though always poor, may attain elevation, in the intellectual and moral scale of being, which stamps a worth upon his character, and ensures respect from his fellows, that can never be attained by him who is shut out from mental improvement, and exists under the degrading conviction, that he is a mere drudge, a chattel, a slave. There is no country under heaven, where this state of things, is so incongruous, and oppressive as in our own. For here every



citizen may aspire to better his condition, or seek without impediment the highest place for which he is qualified.

If this state of things, in comparison with other countries, be not known generally to the ignorant slave, thus heightening his misery by the contrast, yet it is seen by thousands whose bosoms are not steeled to the sufferings of others, and it fills them with pangs of regret, for they know it is unrighteous. The argument therefore from this source, goes to show that their relations to us, should be changed as soon as possible. And since it is morally impossible, that they should be raised to a participation of equality with us, they must be removed from us. Righteousness requires this, even could there be assurance of the kindest treatment hereafter.

But if an equivalent for service were rendered, as alleged, in the first purchase money, the inquiry arises, whether it were rendered to the rightful claimant? Was it paid to the slave himself, or to his family or his kindred? Ah no. He was torn from his family, his kindred, and country, in the midst of alarm, and terror, conflagration and blood, occasioned for the very purpose of kidnapping, stealing and carrying off the defenceless. The purchase money was paid perhaps at the public market, as for any other commodity which had several times changed masters; perhaps it was paid to the man who fitted out the ship and furnished it with manacles and fetters and chains to go on this expedition of robbery. And his agents in this nefarious traffic paid it to the manstealer in Africa, who headed the ruffian band that attacked and burnt the peaceful village. And thus it is that the purchase money, the equivalent for a life of servitude, the earnings of the slave, are advanced beforehand, to pay the price of robbery and manstealing and murder, and all the horrors of the *middle passage*, and the sufferings of human beings crammed into the hold of a slave ship! This is the manner in which slaves have been acquired, these three hundred years in the West Indies, and two hundred in North America! And this is the tenure by which they were holden, at the formation of our national government.

But as the knowledge of christian truth and civil rights advanced, and the consciences of men, who retained some traces of humanity, began to smite them, behold, the Jesuits were employed to find out from scripture, a title to the slave, which should prove as valid as the *divine right of kings*. They found it written, "cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren." (Gen. ix. 25.)

Without stopping to inquire whether Canaan or his descendants inhabited Africa or not, they concluded that none could be more truly styled, "servant of servants," most abject of all servants, than the African slaves. Thus they not only justify, but applaud the abominable system, as fulfilling the prophecies of Noah, and the decrees of the Almighty. So might the Jews be justified and applauded for crucifying the Saviour. So might we justify and applaud the foulest crimes that ever disgraced humanity. But again, they found regulations in the Mosaic law, respecting servants bought with money; and even in the New-Testament, the "servants that are under the yoke are exhorted to be obedient to their masters not only to the gentle, but to the froward." Now these sage reasoners, forget that our Saviour said, that some things under the Jewish dispensation were tolerated because of the hardness of their hearts, which were by no means approved. And it is necessary to make laws to restrain existing evils. Besides the Apostle Paul represents the condition of a servant under the Jewish polity as nothing different from that of a child under age. (*Gal. 4. 1.*) And as most excellent provisions were made for the instruction and management of children, and the servants were inmates of the family, and all were commanded to love the stranger, it could not be that their servitude had the shadow of a resemblance to West Indian or Southern slavery. The utmost limit also of involuntary bondage was six years.

But if giving directions on the subject authorized slavery, then requiring obedience to civil rulers, justified Nero, under whose government the christians were, in being a tyrant, and condemns all christians, under whatever circumstances, for resisting the powers that be, however oppressive, because civil government is ordained of God.

Now from the general tenure of the scriptures we learn not only our duties, but our rights, with respect to our fellow men. And making the bible its own interpreter, no argument can be derived to justify or even countenance slavery in its present forms. It should therefore have made a Congress-man from Massachusetts, a man of talents and high standing as a scholar, and foresooth a clergyman too,—it should have made him blush and hang his head to have used these Jesuitical arguments in the halls of legislation, as the representative of a free people. Spirits of '76! forever will ye frown upon such ignorance and baseness!!

It will be asked then, if not under the sanction of God, by what

tenure are servants bound to perpetual bondage in the United States? It is by conventional agreement; and the charter is written intelligibly, though with studious effort to conceal it, when the curse shall have been wiped away; it is recognized in the fundamental constitution of the government. And it is founded on the maxim long since exploded, that "*power gives right.*"

Suppose under this sanction "*power gives right,*" I claim the person of a man, a black man, or a white man, it makes no difference which, and require that all his faculties of body and mind during life, shall be employed solely for my benefit. Suppose he resists my claim and appeals to the high chancery of heaven, and files the declaration, "Of one blood hath God made all nations of men to dwell on the face of the whole earth," and quotes the statute, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." My claim in *foro conscientiæ*, and before the eternal Judge is abandoned; I give it up. But I claim indemnification under the social compact of the United States, which has undertaken, in the case of the black man, who was bought with money or inherited with the paternal estate, to guarantee this alledged property, whether by right or by wrong, to be holden forever, and without such stipulation, between the original thirteen States, white men in this country could not have established for themselves a free government. But impressed with the maxims of heavenly wisdom, that "a little, with righteousness, is better than great revenues without right," the one half of the slave holders or the whole body of them come forward and say to the nation we cannot conscientiously hold this alledged property in human flesh, nor can we by relinquishing it beggar our families. We claim indemnification from the body politic, that guaranteed to us the possession of so much property. Why may not this claim be substantiated? unless we still abide by the barbarous maxim, that "*power gives right.*" And if we do, then the old Congress under the articles of confederation, or the people of the United States when they ratified the present constitution, might with equal justice have guaranteed, to the states of New-York, Massachusetts and New-Hampshire, their claims to jurisdiction over the green mountains, and to *tribute* also, if there had been *power* enough to exact it. If such guarantee had been unfortunately made, rather than fulfil it, long since would its obligation have been cancelled by dollars. Now I ask, what can constitutionally or righteously

hinder the government, on proper application,\* from cancelling in this way both the claims of the master and the living slave. The dead we cannot relieve from the terrible pressure of that dire necessity which forced us into such a compact. But I trust in God, the time is not distant, when our judges of the supreme court, will take the high, and righteous and holy ground, that the United States, according to the explicit or implied obligations of that instrument, are bound to pay the ransom of every person held in bondage under its provisions, and set that person at liberty. I ask who might not claim it, under the first and glorious principles of the constitution itself? How can we rest, till the incongruity of our practice, with our political doctrines, in the face of all the world, shall no more be justly cast in our teeth.

In the mean time, I am willing, and I trust every patriotic and good citizen is willing, to contribute, both of his property and of his influence, to urge forward this tardy and leaden-footed justice, to the consummation of her purposes. We can do it through the medium of the Colonization Society. This society stands on higher ground than those, which ask merely for charity. She comes to the very door of our conscience, and demands of us to satisfy the claims of righteousness and truth, while we provide safety for our wives and our children, our altars and our firesides, our state, and our common country. Her claims will now be liberally answered by our contributions.

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*Note.* \*The hints in the preceding discourse are thrown out to elicit discussion. If it should be necessary to recede from some of the positions there taken, it will be no grief when a flood of light is poured upon the subject. That the general government are bound to free the land from the curse of slavery is suggested as righteous and equitable, on the same principles as granting pensions to the revolutionary soldiers. It is fulfilling as near as may be lawful an ancient contract. Perhaps the principles of the Constitution of the United States do not admit of interference on this subject, except at the request of the several states particularly concerned. But when an acknowledged evil exists, there must be a remedy, under institutions like our own, capable of being formed and fashioned by the community.











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